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MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE.

A

BACCALAUREATE DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT,

AUGUST 6, 1865,

BY

BENJAMIN LABAREE, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE,

ON THE

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS PRESIDENCY.

Published by Request of the Trustees.

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DISCOURSE.

ISAIAH xxi. 11, 12.

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT? WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT? THE WATCHMAN SAID, THE MORNING COMETH.

This is one of the briefest of Isaiah's prophecies, and at the same time, one of the most obscure. It is not difficult to understand the sentences we have read, but there are other words in the connection, which have greatly perplexed verbal critics and commentators. The whole prophecy reads thus:

"The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come."

We shall not attempt to penetrate the obscurity in which some of this language is involved, nor to trace its geographical and historical relations. That part of the prophecy, chosen for our text, though highly figurative, is easily explained. Some one is represented in the character of a watchman. It was the duty of this official in olden time, not only to guard the city and protect property and persons by night, but to proclaim the divisions of time as they passed, and to announce the joyful approach of morning.

The prophet Isaiah was not only the instructor and guide, but the appointed guardian of his people. He is here referred to under the figure of a watchman. The particular occasion on which this prophecy was uttered, we cannot determine with certainty, but it was obviously a period, when the Israelites had just passed, or were then passing, through severe national trials and

calamities, which are represented in the figure by the darkness of night. The prophet as watchman is supposed to understand the origin, the magnitude and probable duration of these calamities, and therefore a voice, doubtless representing many voices, calls to him and inquires, What of the night? and in the earnestness of desire to know the truth, and to know it speedily, the question is repeated, What of the night? Has midnight passed? Is the morning light approaching? Relieved of metaphor, the questioner asks, Are there severer calamities yet to come? or may we hope soon to enjoy a period of repose and prosperity? To their great joy and delight, the watchman replies—*The morning cometh.* Trials are passed, peace and prosperity are at hand.

The ancient people of God, through the whole period of their national history, were subject often to trials and afflictions. These were frowns of Providence, designed sometimes as punishments for failures in duty, sometimes as trials of faith, and often as discipline of character. Such experience is not peculiar to the Israelites, it is the common lot of humanity. There is no good accomplished by man without exertion, and human activity is ever liable to disappointment. From the training of the infant mind to the conversion of a world, there is work to be done, obstacles to encounter, trials to endure. When, therefore, in our work of life, disappointments, even fiery trials come upon us, we must not think that some strange thing has happened to us; it is only a part of that moral discipline which is allotted to all, and is needed by all in this probationary state. Institutions and nations, as well as individuals, have their trials, and in every case the important practical question should be, What is the design of these afflictions, and how can they be wisely improved?

As this is the twenty-fifth anniversary of my connection with Middlebury College, I hope it will not be thought unsuitable to the place or the occasion, if I give a historical direction to my discourse at the present time.

The rise and progress of the higher Literary Institutions of our country form an interesting and instructive feature in our national history. They originated, for the most part, in private enterprise and religious benevolence; they encountered many

obstacles and struggled hard in their early career, but encouraged and sustained by an intelligent, Christian people, they gradually acquired stability, compactness and character, and soon took a prominent place among the civilizing forces of the nation. The united influence of these several institutions upon the cause of general education, of social happiness and of Christianity, stands prominent among those agencies which have raised this Republic to an elevated rank among the nations of the earth. The foundations of this nation were laid on the broad pillars of intelligence and virtue, and to enlarge, strengthen and protect these foundations has been the appropriate work of our institutions of learning, and that they have done that work well and faithfully is proved by many witnesses at home and abroad. Each of these institutions has an individual history peculiar to itself, and can speak of trials and of triumphs, of prosperity and adversity, of the smiles and the frowns of Providence. Middlebury College has not escaped these common vicissitudes. Alternations of darkness and light, of hope and fear have diversified its progress through the whole current of its life, but never have those vicissitudes been more striking and eventful than during the last quarter of a century.

It is my present purpose to speak of the condition of the Institution as it was found in 1840—to notice some of the incidents in its history since that period—and then to inquire, What are its prospects for the future ?

Middlebury College was never suitably endowed. Its early founders, in their praiseworthy zeal to establish an Institution for the benefit of young men in Western Vermont, did not first sit down and count the cost. When it came from the hands of the Legislature as a chartered Institution, its whole corporate property, buildings, funds, lands and library, was worth less than five thousand dollars! *Hope* was the corner stone of the new edifice, the benevolence of the people, and confiding trust in Providence, its only endowments. And the same warm and vigorous hope which so animated the founders and early guardians, has ever been a sustaining and impelling force in the hearts of their successors—that appreciative intelligence and cordial sympathy of the people, which was accorded so generously at the dawn of the Institution, have never been with-

drawn, but have rather grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength. And that divine Providence, so early and so earnestly invoked, and so confidently relied upon to favor and direct, has never forsaken it, though sometimes indeed, as trials to faith and incentives to effort—clouds have been permitted to obscure the vision and chill the ardor of hope. Indeed there have been two or three periods in its history, when these clouds have so increased in density and darkness as almost to appal the stoutest heart, and call forth the earnest inquiry, Watchman, what of the night? Such a period was 1840. The thickness of darkness or the degree of discouragement felt by the friends of the Institution at that time cannot be well understood without the recital of a few facts.

In his semi-centennial discourse, my predecessor in office mentions two periods of trial and darkness, which fell within his own observation, the former at the time of his accession to office in 1818, the latter about the time of his resignation in 1839. Of this he says, "there was darkness in the land, yes, and to those who were near, that darkness was seen; and by those who possessed a keen sensibility, it might, like that of Egypt, be felt. About that time, there was by death and resignation, a general change, in rapid succession, of the officers of instruction. And however able and faithful the new officers were, they could not at once obtain the confidence of the community in which they were strangers, and to whose views and habits they were not accustomed. Of course, discouragement returned and depression followed." To this candid statement of Dr. Bates, I must add, that in the following year, 1840, the discouragement was increased, the depression sunk still lower, by adding to the board of instruction yet another stranger in the person of a new President, and the Faculty was then full. And singular enough, but one of the permanent officers was a graduate of the College. No one of them had been connected with the Institution more than two and a half years. We had taken the places of men well known to the immediate community and to the citizens of the State, and endeared to graduates, patrons and friends by years of earnest and faithful devotion to the interests of the College. The late President and senior Professor had been so long identi-

fied with the Institution, that they were looked upon by many as almost essential parts of its being. The retiring President was a gentleman of high standing, of popular talents and of large experience; he had for more than twenty years given his time, wisdom and energies, to the advancement of the pecuniary, the intellectual and the religious interests of the College, and, until recently, his administration had been highly successful. The Senior Professor had occupied different chairs of instruction for twenty-seven years, and perhaps no college officer was ever more sincerely beloved by his pupils. The loss of two such officers at the same time, would, in any circumstances, have disturbed the tranquillity of an institution, but the peculiar circumstances connected with the resignation of these gentlemen gave general, and in some instances intense dissatisfaction to the sons of the College. This condition of affairs was sufficient of itself to produce discouragement and depression. But this change in the Faculty was not the only revolution that had occurred. Compare the catalogue of 1836 with that of 1840. On the former you find the names of 168 students, on the latter only 46. The class that graduated in 1838 was equal to the number present in all the classes in 1840. What terrible convulsion had shaken the Institution and thrown off so many of its students? One gentleman compared it to the falling of leaves from a tree in autumn. But how unfavorable must have been the effect of such a change upon the public mind, and especially upon the minds of young men who were contemplating a course of collegiate study? No one will be surprised to learn that a smaller class entered Middlebury that year than had entered previously for thirty years.

But what were the financial prospects of the Institution? Here also there was darkness, and darkness to be felt. The productive funds of the College were small; all the sources of income united were insufficient to defray one half the annual expenses. 'In this depressed state of its finances how can the Institution be sustained? We must appeal again to the people, to the friends of education and of Christianity. The College has a strong hold upon the kind feelings and benevolent regards of the religious community. It has furnished pastors for our churches, missionaries for domestic and foreign fields, teachers for schools

and academies, and Presidents and Professors for Colleges, in different parts of the country. It has earned a good name among the people, and has been somewhat distinguished for its active religious character. The Christian public then will certainly appreciate the importance of such an Institution, and will come to its relief.' Such was the reasoning of the new President; he felt confident that these views and hopes were based upon a solid foundation. His predecessor once said that the College "had been compelled to *struggle hard and beg stoutly.*" By continuing this hard struggle and stout begging, it was believed that we might soon emerge from the gloom of night into the brightness of morning.

But there were facts and obstacles lying beneath the surface, that would have changed, materially, the aspect of affairs, had they been known at the time. It soon appeared that an important part of the religious community were looking with cold distrust upon the College, and were disposed to give their patronage to other institutions. As this withdrawal of confidence by several ministers and churches forms a prominent feature in that cloud of darkness which, like an ill-omened bird, hovered over the Institution, the truth of history demands that we give it a brief notice.

An impartial statement of the events referred to has never to my knowledge been written, and the attempt to fill this gap in history, will make necessary the rehearsal of a few antecedent facts.—The two literary Institutions in Western Vermont, known as the University and the College, commenced their active career about the same time, and thenceforward became competitors for the patronage of the public. The College was entirely dependent upon the private bounty of its friends, but the University was sustained, in a large degree, by endowments from the State. Yet the College took the lead, and for nearly two score years maintained a decided ascendency, enjoying a large measure of public favor, and sending forth from year to year a respectable number of graduates, in the proportion of five for two furnished by the University. In scholarship, in character, in position and in active influences for the good of man, the sons of Middlebury would not shrink from a comparison with those of the other Institution.

The time soon came when these Institutions stood before the Christian public as antagonists, on grounds of a religious nature ; they occupied positions somewhat different, both in relation to the churches and to the State. "Middlebury College," says my predecessor, "commenced its career and rose rapidly to a condition of respectability and usefulness under *the special blessing of Heaven.* It not only had the sympathies of the community, the counsels of the wise and the prayers of the pious in its favor, but these sympathies were effectually called into exercise, these counsels were well matured and faithfully applied, and these prayers were heard and answered in mercy. No literary Institution in the land has been blessed with more frequent, more pure, more refreshing revivals of religion." It was this decided religious character that gave the College its strong hold upon the Christian communities in Vermont and elsewhere. At the same time its independent charter, its self-perpetuating Board of Trustees, relieved its friends from all apprehension of political interference. On the other hand the charter of the University says,—"the by-laws shall not tend to give preference to any religious sect or denomination whatsoever." The Legislature obviously intended that it should be strictly an undenominational Institution. How could it be otherwise, as the income is derived in a large degree from public funds that belong equally to all denominations. Says the late President Marsh in an address to the public in behalf of the Institution,—"The University is the child of the State, and the State pledged itself to the country and the world that she would not be behind other States, &c. Is not the public honor pledged to see that this Institution rises to a level with the most favored Institutions of New England ?" This connection with the State was the occasion of some embarrassment, as will appear from the following extracts. Professor Clark remarks, "The connection of the University with the State gave rise to political intrigues and brought little aid to an embarrassed treasury." Says Dr. Wheeler, "The connection of the political authority of the State with the University in the appointment of Trustees, excited the fears of the religious public that the Institution might be controlled for political purposes. The religious controversy, which arose about 1810–1812, (the Unita-

rian controversy,) served to increase the solicitude respecting the religious influence of the University. These thoughts and opinions being made prominent by the competition that more or less existed in relation to Middlebury College, all led to the appointment of a Faculty of marked religious character."

It will be remembered that the College from the beginning and through all its early history, was identified with the religious interests of the community. Its light was not hid under a bushel; its bugle-blast gave forth no uncertain sound, its banner was of the clear unequivocal orthodox type. To this open avowal and continued maintenance of decided religious sentiments is to be attributed, in no small degree, the prosperity of the Institution. On the other hand the first President of the University, and one or two of its early Professors, were supposed to have adopted those liberal views of Christianity, which were not in accordance with the religious opinions of the clergy and churches in Vermont, who were the most liberal patrons and efficient supporters of literary Institutions. These facts give great significance to the statement of Dr. Wheeler, "that a Faculty was appointed (in 1815) of marked religious character." *Three* of the four gentlemen thus appointed, were prominent orthodox clergymen from Massachusetts.—But this experiment was not successful, the University did not prosper, and these gentlemen in a few years all resigned and returned to their native State.

Soon the College came into competition with a new religious phase of the State University. Philosophy was destined thenceforth to play a prominent part in that Institution. A gentleman was called to preside over it, eminent alike for his attainments as a scholar, his philosophical acumen, and his upright, amiable character. One of his associates has said: "He was altogether a riper scholar than had ever been connected with the University. He was more variously learned, more profoundly acquainted with the philosophical grounds of all literary and scientific investigation, and practically more conversant with the habits both of literary institutions and of students,"—and moreover, "he was aided by colleagues worthy of himself."

On the accession of this new Faculty, important changes were made in the course of instruction and method of teaching

generally, but especially in developing and applying religious truth. These new views and methods urged and advocated, publicly and privately by men of learning and eloquence, awakened attention, excited discussion and produced no little fermentation in the religious community. The State Institution now became the champion of the new philosophy, and claimed to be the pioneer in the abstruse investigations and scientific exposition of a more elevated and spiritual system of intellectual and moral truth. It maintained that the system of philosophy, that had long prevailed in our schools of learning, and had been adopted by our best and ablest men, was established on a false foundation, and that it had led many a youth into doubt and skepticism. It charged that the old and current system substituted mere history for science, and fact for principle; that it exalted the ability of man, and yet placed him under bondage to motive; that it overlooked or undervalued the intuitions of the reason and constructed philosophy out of the ever changing and unreliable phenomena of the understanding; and in short that a sensuous and accommodating utilitarianism, had displaced or obscured truths, absolute, universal and imperishable. In opposition to these alleged errors the new philosophy taught that some of the great truths of religion, such as the being of God, immortality, and retribution, were not to be imparted from without, but awakened and developed from within; that man must believe in order to know, and not know in order to believe, that every truth must be capable of accurate definition and precise statement, and must find its exact place in the great edifice of knowledge; and moreover, that every measure, adopted to promote the interests of religion, must find its approval in the cool deliberations of the reason; that the sensibilities are variable and deceptive, and that the judgment of a philosopher is more likely to be correct, and therefore more trust-worthy, than the experience of the unlearned. Thus philosophy was made the basis of religion, and revelation was mainly the reaffirmation of great truths and principles which have their primitive abode in the human spirit.

Still with high claims to scholarship and profound thought, the University did not prosper. The clergy were afraid of a new system of doctrines openly and professedly opposed to the

current and long established opinions; the people were suspicious of a philosophy clothed in foreign costume and speaking a language which they could not comprehend. The College pursued the even tenor of its way, distrusting innovations in education and religion, and inquiring for the old paths. It adhered to the sentiment of the fathers, except when clear convictions of the practical value of a change, urged to some modifications. It believed that all the powers and faculties of man should be developed by the educator, and addressed by the religious guide, for the purposes they have in view—the understanding, the conscience, the sensibilities, the reasoning faculty, and those common-sense views of man and of life which guide and regulate in practical affairs. While it taught that the highest self-culture was important and should be aimed at by every scholar, it was still a cardinal doctrine with the College, that man's aims should not centre in himself; that his disciplined powers, his acquisitions and all his cultivated energies should be consecrated to the good of man and the glory of God.

In teaching the great principles of religion, the University would address truth in due form and proportion to the reason, the conscience, and the intellectual taste, and there leave it to work out its own results in accordance with the laws of thought. The College believed that man's emotional nature was designed to subserve his religious interests, and it therefore appealed to his hopes and his fears, his joys and his sorrows, his susceptibilities of pleasure and pain, and through his sensibilities sought to move the sluggish powers of his soul to action. It deemed it legitimate moreover to call in the aid of social sympathy, and of external influences, to give effect to religious truth, for which it claimed to have not only the sanction of sound philosophy, but the express authority of Scripture.

The President of the College was an ardent, active Christian, a popular preacher, and a promoter of religious revivals; the Pastor of the Congregational church in Middlebury was perhaps the ablest preacher in Vermont, and indeed very few men in the country had more ability to impress upon the minds and hearts of a popular assembly the solemn truths and obligations of religion. These devoted, earnest men, were harmonious co-laborers in promoting the spiritual interests of the College, the

church, and the community; and their labors were crowned with great success. The College and the church in Middlebury became distinguished throughout the country for the frequency and the power of their revivals of religion.

In the year 1836, there appeared in Vermont an evangelist, who had acquired a good deal of notoriety in other States as a promoter of revivals. Wherever he preached, a religious excitement followed, resulting usually in the accession of a large number to the church. His fame went out through the land; by many he was regarded as an able and faithful preacher of the great truths of evangelical religion; by others his ministry was looked upon with distrust and alarm. At length he was invited to the church in Middlebury, where he remained several weeks, addressing almost daily, large assemblies. By his impressive discourses and peculiar measures, scores and perhaps hundreds were led into the fold of the church. Here also opinions were divided respecting the man and his measures. The great majority, I believe, approved or silently acquiesced, but a few, and some of the most intelligent and influential men in the community did not hesitate to express privately and publicly, their decided disapproval of the course pursued by this erratic evangelist. The President of the College and the Pastor of the church became intimately associated with these labors and methods of proceeding. They co-operated with the preacher, not only in Middlebury, but in other places, gave him countenance and counsel, and lent him the influence of their names and character in different parts of the State. By such means the College became identified with these transactions, to the great grief and displeasure of many of its most valuable friends.

At first the gentlemen of the University looked upon the singular scenes transpiring in our religious community, as silent, but interested spectators. They saw, they heard, they reflected, and at length took an open and decided stand against the evangelist and his measures. Previously they had not been much accustomed to mingle in the society of the clergy or the churches, but now laying aside all reserve, they came forth to expose and resist these, to their view, dangerous innovations. Associations of ministers were visited, public assemblies ad-

dressed, the columns of the religious press put in requisition, private letters written, all to arrest and drive back this tide of error and delusion, as they considered it, that seemed to be flowing over the State. And these extraordinary exertions were not without effect. Soon the University came to be regarded as the champion of order, of wisdom and of religious prudence, while the College was supposed to countenance irregularity, innovation, and radicalism. As confidence was withdrawn from the College, it very naturally centered in the University, the fortunes of the former rapidly declined, those of the latter were in the ascendant; its alleged errors in philosophy were for the time being forgiven, in view of the service it had rendered to practical religion. Middlebury had lost public confidence.

This displeasure of many of the clergy and churches, together with the alienation of the graduates of the College for reasons before mentioned, were operating in all their force in 1840. Other causes co-operated in producing the unfortunate results, but none was more discouraging or more difficult to remove than this alienation of sons, patrons and friends. "Confidence," it has been said, "is a plant of slow growth." For many other misfortunes and calamities there is often a speedy remedy. If a vacancy occurs in the Faculty of instruction, by death or resignation, it is soon supplied; if a college edifice is consumed by fire, in a few months it rises again, in all its majesty and beauty; but when the friends of a College turn from it with warm expressions of disfavor, no immediate cure of the evil can be found. Time and wisdom, industry and patience will be required to restore harmony, to reinspire respect, and to repair the golden chain of confidence that has been so unhappily sundered.

At this distance of time, should candid men be called to pronounce an impartial verdict upon the 'new measure controversy' of that period, we think their rendering would be substantially as follows: 'The movement was not the work of enemies of religion, but of the sincerest friends. It had its origin in a warm and earnest desire to promote the highest good of men, but in selecting the instruments to accomplish this purpose, due regard was not had to their character and their fitness to times

and circumstances. The united labors of the President and Pastor had previously been greatly blessed among the churches, and if in their well-meant pious endeavors, they, in a given instance, countenanced men or approved of measures, that a sober, conservative people could not endorse, it should have been attributed to an incautious excess of zeal, and readily have been pardoned. Instead of this, the mistake of these good men was seized upon, magnified and multiplied by interested parties, until suspicions were excited, apprehensions awakened, and confidence seriously impaired.'

Such we believe will be the verdict of impartial history in respect to transactions that involved this Institution in serious troubles.

It is due to the memory of my predecessor in office to say, that a familiar acquaintance with his long and prosperous administration of the affairs of this College, has revealed to me very few mistakes, and the one under review grew out of his ardent desire to promote the highest spiritual good of the College and the community; the motive was eminently creditable to him as a Christian, a minister and a College officer; but his wisdom was at fault in the choice of agencies by which the object was to be effected. The pastor of this church at that period, was censured in no slight degree for the part he took in those transactions. Men of the world, who stood entirely aloof from religion, were ready to assail the good man with the sharpest weapons of criticism; and there were even clergymen, whose ministry had been long doomed to perpetual sterility, who could hurl their missiles against a brother, distinguished for a fruitful ministry, but who had unwisely given his sanction to methods and measures of questionable propriety. Who can point me to a minister of Christ within the limits of this commonwealth, living or deceased, to whom our churches owe so large a debt of gratitude, as to Thomas A. Merrill? Surely such a man might have been excused for one mistake. In pronouncing, however, upon these errors of judgment, it is well to remember that the same evangelist preached the same doctrines and pursued similar measures under the auspices of the President of Dartmouth College, and that Institution received no detriment. How shall

we account for this difference? Do we find the solution in the fact that there is but one College in New Hampshire?

Deep and saddening as was this darkness of 1840, to outward appearance it did not reach its full intensity until 1847. For seven weary years the Institution struggled against neglect and poverty, suspicion and distrust, carefully balancing between hope and fear, and painfully oscillating between life and death, until the afflictive Providence of God was added to the unfriendly agencies of man, and we were borne down into the deep, dark valley of sorrow and despondency. During the Fall Term of that year, two of our valuable instructors died, two resigned, and one was prostrated with sickness. An epidemic prevailed among the students, many were ill, and three or four were removed by death. At this time, too, the question of uniting the College with the University was projected upon us; and it demanded much time, care and thought, occasioned a protracted correspondence of no little perplexity, and filled our friends with painful apprehensions that the end of the College was drawing nigh. In December, 1847, we might have made the following record,—'The Faculty consists of a President and one Professor, the College has almost no endowment, and is deeply in debt. Three clergymen, men of position and character, had successively been employed to raise funds to relieve the Institution, and each in sadness had reported that nothing could be done.' From this state of facts, some of the warmest friends and oldest sons of the College came to the conclusion, painful as it was, that Middlebury College had done its work, and that nothing more remained for her, but calmly to fold her robes around her, and lie down to her long repose.—If at that time, the question had been put, Watchman, what of the night? we should have replied, 'It is midnight, a horror of great darkness is upon us.'

But all was not lost—hope still lingered—strong faith in final success nerved the arm to effort—and the bow of promise appeared in the distant horizon to cheer us on to duty. We girded ourselves to the work before us, and left results to the Father of mercies. The first objects of immediate and pressing necessity were, a Faculty, and funds. Our endeavors to procure competent men to fill the vacant chairs of instruction

were crowned with good success, and at the Commencement of 1848 it appeared that a valid subscription had been secured of *twenty-five thousand dollars!* "Watchman, what of the night? Behold the morning cometh."

Two years later occurred the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the College, when the graduates of all ages and professions, from homes near and remote, came back to the old homestead, to enjoy together a brief season of intellectual recreation, of friendly greeting and of social festivity. That anniversary had a decided influence in advancing the interests of the College; it removed prejudices, it renewed friendships, it revived slumbering affections, it led to a higher appreciation of the practical value of the education here obtained, it awakened strong desires for the perpetuity and enlargement of the College, it corrected, public opinion, and, in a good measure, restored confidence. To the upward tendency already begun, it gave a strong impulse, encouraging the hearts, strengthening the hands, and stimulating the endeavors of all who were engaged in the service of the College, and thus uniting the sons of the Institution, and the friends and patrons of education, in a common effort for its relief and enlargement.

The gentle rays of prosperity continued to shine upon us, occasionally intercepted by clouds and brief eclipses, until they culminated in 1861, in a beautiful new college edifice, well filled with students.—Watchman, what of the night? Again the response is heard, The morning cometh; but soon, alas, he was constrained to say, also cometh the night.—The drum, the fife, the bugle blasts of war were heard in our valleys and on our hill-tops, exciting the martial ardor of our youth and calling them to the defense of their country. In this general gathering of the clans for the protection of the nation's life, shall College students be excused? Grant them exemption from military service at such a time, and you do but increase their ardor for the conflict. Try to persuade them to wait until their course of study is completed and they reply, "That may be too late, our country needs us now," and speedily the classics are exchanged for the musket and the cutlass, and in solid platoons they hasten to the camp. And yet we are tauntingly reproached with the question, "Where are your students?" Fervid orations are

pronounced, earnest appeals are addressed to the public by interested parties, political, educational and religious; private letters are written to men who are supposed to have influence on the subject, all to show that our Colleges in Vermont are going to ruin, because they have but few students, and that the only hope of continued life, is *to merge them all in one.* Whether such representations are fair and candid, we will not now inquire, but it seems to some of us, not a little unkind to pervert the outflow of our patriotism into a reason for our annihilation. Who needs be told that the war has made large demands upon all our literary Institutions? In some parts of our country, Colleges have been suspended, while professors and pupils rushed to the great conflict. In other places the number of students has been greatly diminished by the calls of their country for defenders. Thus scores and hundreds have been drawn from institutions of all grades, the preparatory school, the College, and the professional seminary, into the army. In the universal uprising of patriotism for the defense of liberty and law, all classes of citizens are entitled to high praise, but the young scholars of the country will not suffer in comparison with any other class. It was not the hope of a little romantic pastime, nor a temporary outburst of enthusiasm, that drew them from classical halls to the stern conflicts of the battle-field, or to the no less fatal malaria of the camps; a higher and more noble motive impelled them to the field. Sad and sorrowful is the record of our noble band of heroes. *Bennett* was the first to offer himself on the altar of his country, and the first to seal his devotion with his life. *Crane* fell at the head of his company, with his face to the foe, in that sanguinary conflict, the battle of the Wilderness. *Williamson*, having acquired high reputation as an officer of cavalry, received his death wound at Cold Harbor, of which he soon died. Of the forty undergraduates, who went forth to the war, these, with one exception, are all of whose death I have been assured, though others who escaped death are maimed and crippled for life. It may not be improper to add that about the same number of recent graduates joined the army, some fresh from college halls, others from the various occupations and professions in life. They acquitted themselves like men, several were promoted for their valor, and Davenport

and Cadwell, Converse and Eaton died the honorable death of soldiers at the post of duty.—This depletion of our numbers is our misfortune, but not our disgrace. We are not ashamed of our record—and as war has reduced us from one hundred to fifty, the return of peace will soon raise us again, we are confident, even beyond the former limit.

The last ingredient in our cup of sorrow was a *Baptism by fire.* The scene is familiar to your memories, and needs no description. The night of the 25th of December, 1864, cannot soon be forgotten by any who witnessed the conflagration ; and on the hearts of some the impression was made as with the point of a diamond. How mysterious are the movements of Providence ! "Thy way is in the sea, thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Was it in anger or in mercy, that his hand was laid so heavily upon us ? If in anger, why did he arrest the flames before they utterly consumed us ? If not in mercy, why did he permit us so soon to repair the desolations of that memorable night ? We endeavored humbly to accept a Father's correction, and to bow submissively before his chastising rod, and to day we are permitted to lift up our heads with rejoicing to give thanks to his holy name, that the fire-marks are obliterated, and that our noble edifice now presents itself to view, renewed and re-established, beaming forth in conscious pride, in all its original freshness and comely proportions. Watchman, what of the night ? The night has departed, the morning has come—the light of the king of day scatters its golden fringes along the Eastern horizon and gives high promise of his early coming.

Still, the sad experience of the past will not allow us to be wholly unconcerned respecting the future. Fogs and mists yet linger upon the mountains, and sometimes brood in darkness over the vallies, reminding us ominously of the possible approach of another night. The condition of the higher institutions of learning in Vermont, is quite peculiar. Public sentiment is divided and confused in regard to them. It demands progress, but does not comprehend what true progress is. It seeks for some great thing, but has no well defined idea what it wants. Some, who aspire to be directors of the public mind in matters of education, are as poorly qualified for the office, as is

the boy who flies the kite, to give lectures on the resolution of forces. With many, *thorough* education is at a discount, and some royal road to learning is sought for, which will carry pupils with railroad speed to the goal of their ambition. One of the most unpromising signs of the times is the readiness with which the public ear listens to those tyros and empyrics, who assail established and long-tried systems, and propose to teach all that is important for young men to know in six months. But there are yet more grave and threatening innovations than these. Within a few years past the educational interests of our State have been discussed with great animation and sometimes with a little acrimony. On the assumption that we have too many Colleges in Vermont, various plans of union have been proposed by the Legislature, by the Trustees of some of the institutions, or by individuals interested; but no one has yet met with general favor. Nothing will satisfy the large desires of some ambitious minds, but a great central Institution, that shall embrace and control all the higher departments of education in the State, and give tone and direction to all inferior grades of instruction. That such a central power, under the guidance of political authority, and oftentimes no doubt of a single will, would not promote the highest interests of the people, we most fully believe. It is not according to the genius of our popular institutions to concentrate power in a few hands. Institutions of education, as well as civil institutions, may serve as checks and balances to each other. Suppose there was but one Theological Seminary in the country, it might soon control the theological opinions of the nation, and then, having no competitor, no antagonist, it would pass to a state of indolent repose, and make no progress in the march of thought. Comparison, competition and mental conflict are indispensable to all healthful vigorous advancement in knowledge. This notion of centralization in education and in other departments of human activity, has become a favorite one with some at the present time. But it tends to evil, and if not checked by suitable guards and balances, the result may be highly prejudicial to the best interests of the people. Let the moneyed power of a State as represented in Banks and Railroads, be united with the educational power, and placed under the direction of a great

central, political influence, and the character of humanity must be greatly improved, or the rights of the people would be seriously endangered.

If, however, other institutions desire to try the experiment of consolidation, we will not object, we only ask to be allowed to pursue our own chosen way unmolested. Our College has kept aloof, as far as possible, from these agitations, choosing to stand where its charter placed it, upon an independent foundation, and to rely upon Divine Providence and its own energies. It wages no war with other institutions, it throws no obstacles in their way, it wishes them no evil, but leaves them to carry out their own convictions of propriety and of duty; but is fully determined on this,—it will avoid all alliances, incompatible with its character and integrity. The discussions and appeals and colored statements referred to, have awakened fears in the hearts of some good friends, that Middlebury College must voluntarily unite with some other institution, or be involuntarily absorbed. There are those, we are sorry to say, who are constitutionally timid; they were never made for soldiers; in every little emergency they are ready to exclaim, "There is a lion in the way." Others are naturally ambitious; they are lovers of learning, but they love that learning most especially that flows from large institutions. They are patrons of education, but they have no favors to bestow upon one that is always asking for help. "Wait," they say, "wait until you become strong, and we will aid you." Some love to do good, but not in obscurity; their benevolence must be made conspicuous, by being bestowed upon some magnificent object. Amid this opposition from without and this faint-heartedness within, the discouragement of some and disloyalty of others, the distractions occasioned by war and the desolations by fire, the question has sometimes been put with a sharpness that is both keen and penetrating: "*Can Middlebury College be sustained?*" To this I have replied, and I now reply with assured confidence and strong emphasis,—The College *can* be sustained. In the natural course of events, the Institution cannot expect to meet trials and obstacles more serious and perplexing than those which it has encountered during the last quarter of a century, and if in these embarrassing circumstances its onward progress has been obvious to the eye of the casual observer, what may not be

expected in the new conditions of life on which it is soon to enter? Earnest effort will be required, but that is a pre-requisite to every successful achievement of human activity. If the strenuous endeavors, made by some of the friends of our College, for union or consolidation, had been directed to the upbuilding of the Institution, it would have been much further advanced on the ascending grade of prosperity, than it is found to be at the present time. But taking it as it is, there is no cause for discouragement. I claim to be pretty well acquainted with its past history, its present and prospective resources, its internal condition and external relations, its literary character and methods of education, and I affirm,—and I have no fear of contradiction by any one who understands the subject,—that the promises of future success were never more encouraging than at the present moment. The question under consideration, resolves itself into one of dollars and cents. In these days of rapid progress and of active competition, no literary institution can expect to prosper without, at least respectable endowments, and my faith is strong that with suitable efforts such endowments can be obtained.

If the question, 'Can the College be sustained?' is determined in the affirmative, we are immediately met by another of still greater importance, as some believe, viz., *Ought it to be sustained?* Do the best interests of society demand that Middlebury College be perpetuated? On this point we have not the shadow of a doubt. Nor can we see how judicious men, laying aside prejudice and party interests, can come to any other conclusion. Look at its past history and gather up its important results. See how limited its territory, how straitened in its resources, how many obstacles have impeded its onward progress! It has lived a life of toil and conflict from its origin to the present day, but through the smiles of a benignant Providence, and the unfailing kindness of its friends, it has done good service to the Church, the State, and to the Republic of Letters. During the *sixty-five years* of its existence, nearly eleven hundred graduates have gone forth from its halls;—the number is not large, certainly, compared with older and larger Colleges, but they are men who have made their mark in the world. Yale College has furnished more than six times as many graduates, but that institution is one hundred years older than Mid-

dlebury. Dartmouth, nearly half a century older, has furnished four times as many. Middlebury has sent into the great harvest field, more than one-fourth as many clergymen as Yale, and nearly one-half as many as Dartmouth, and three times as many as the University of Vermont. Her clerical sons have been distinguished among their brethren in *ten* denominations, and they have prosecuted the ministerial work in the largest cities and towns in more than twenty States of the Union, North, South, East and West, and more than thirty have gone as missionaries to distant lands. Ought such an instrument for usefulness to be destroyed?

How does our College stand in the department of educational labor? One or two facts will answer the question. In a late address on Colleges, a distinguished Professor stated that Harvard College had trained forty-one presidents, and one hundred and thirteen professors, for herself and other Colleges, and that Yale College had also trained forty-one presidents, and one hundred and thirteen professors, for herself and other Colleges. They have surely done a great work in the higher departments of education. Middlebury has furnished eighteen presidents, and sixty professors, for herself and other Colleges; that is, one-half as many College officers, as have been supplied by either of the two oldest and largest institutions in the nation! Though its influence has been felt more extensively in the ministry and in the departments of religious and secular education, the Institution can show a large number of sons who have been useful and distinguished in civil and political life as governors, members of Congress, judges and advocates, physicians, scholars and authors. Such are some of the results that bear witness to the character and good influences of Middlebury College. Shall such an Institution be abandoned? Why? What evil hath it done? I have heard but two crimes laid to its charge. 1. *It is small.* 2. *It does not grow fast enough.* So Vermont is a small State; some noisy politicians declare that it is too small to be respectable, and it must therefore be united to some other State. Vermont asks to be judged by her *deeds*, and not by the number of her acres. Let our College be judged by the same standard.

We have fallen upon troublesome times—the public mind is in a state of excitement—society is passing through rapid transformations—moral evil is rushing in among us like a flood. To

arrest this evil, to stem this tide, do we not need just such influences and agencies as Middlebury College has created and sent forth into the world? Men of intellectual strength, of disciplined minds, of religious principle, and of active benevolence—such preachers as Henshaw and Olin, and Henry and Larned; such missionaries as Bingham and Winslow, Fisk and Parsons; such professors as Keith and Chace, Church and Barrows—such Governors as Royce and Slade, Coolidge and Eaton—men of sterling integrity, of inflexible morality, and of broad sympathies with humanity. Men of this character going forth from college halls to engage in the moral conflicts of life, are like a band of well-trained soldiers issuing from the gates of a fortress to drive back an invading foe. Are such fortresses too numerous? Are soldiers of the above described character, disciplined and trained for service more rapidly than the exigencies of the times demand? Who will enter so absurd a plea? Is not the earnest cry now heard through all our borders, "*a famine is approaching—a famine of the bread of life—send us men. Anticipate the evil day, by educating your sons and turning their thoughts to the sacred ministry.*" Then let our College be supported, enlarged, invigorated, that it may offer to the church, to the nation and to humanity, fourfold the amount of educated and consecrated talent that it has been able to do heretofore. Let it not be said that two or three great central institutions can supply the demand for educated mind, better than a large number of smaller Colleges. Reason and history, observation and fact unite to refute the assertion. There must be a limit, certainly, to the multiplication of literary institutions, but where that limit shall be found must be left to the good sense of the community. Now hear the conclusion of our argument. Middlebury College has educated a goodly number of able and useful men for the service of Church and State. Many of these men would not have been educated had it not been for the existence of that Institution. More such men are needed to supply the present necessities of the country. Middlebury will educate them as cheap and as well as they can be educated at other institutions, and will encourage some to seek a public education who would not otherwise enjoy that privilege: therefore the interests of the public require that the College be sustained.

But this College not only can be sustained, and ought to be sustained,—I predict with great confidence that *it will be sustained.*

If silver and gold alone are wanting, silver and gold will be furnished. What mean these large accumulations of property? this unexampled prosperity in the midst of an exhausting and desolating war? What gifts, what princely donations have been made to the cause of humanity! Has there been poured forth on the owners of this wealth such a spirit of exuberant liberality, for no important purpose? The history of the world can probably furnish no example that approaches this generous and universal outpouring of benevolence for the relief of the poor and suffering, as well as for the upbuilding of useful institutions. See ye not the hand of God in this great work? Has he not said, "the silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?" Can he not touch the springs of human volition and cause this treasure to flow forth whithersoever he will? Has he not promised to hear prayer and to bless wisely directed effort? There are peculiar providences at the present time that speak the language of encouragement. Faith, hope, prayer, accompanied with bold and faithful effort, will soon surmount all obstacles and attain the end in view.

I make no pretension to the gift of second sight, but I seem to see in the not distant future, and under a new administration, an incoming prosperity that shall greatly surpass all that has been experienced in former years. The language of the prophet sounds clearly in my ears,—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Young Gentlemen of the Graduating Class:

The second stage in your course of study is now completed—one step more and you will take your places among the public and professional men of the nation. This consummation of your hopes and aspirations may appear to you, in the far distance; but the current of life rolls rapidly onward, and before you are aware of it, the cares, the duties and the perplexities of

life's great work will press heavily upon you. If, in a few short years, then, you are to be numbered among the law-makers, the political and religious guides of the people, men who give tone and direction to public sentiment, the community have a right to know, and they are deeply interested in knowing, what characters, what governing principles of action you are to take with you into those stations of power and influence. Around each and every youth who graduates from College, there gathers a full cluster of hopes or fears, of parental joys and sorrows; but a more public interest is felt, a more general solicitude, respecting the influence he is to exert upon the public weal. In addition to the ordinary lessons of literature and science, of history and philosophy, that your instructors have imparted in the course of your studies, they have endeavored, in view of their responsibility to yourselves, to the public and to God, to impress upon your minds, and to commend to your particular attention, those important practical principles, on which your respectability, your usefulness, and your success in life in no small degree depend. It is not the intellect alone, however cultivated and disciplined, that will promote the best interests of society, but intellect trained to obey the dictates of an enlightened conscience and the laws of God. We have urged upon you, therefore, as an important department of self-education to study to achieve a complete conquest over self; to learn to hold the impulses of the spirit, the passions of the heart, the propensities of the inferior nature in strict subordination to the regal and the rightful sway of the reason and the conscience. No man is fully qualified to guide and govern others until he has learned the art of self-government, and no youth is properly educated, whatever may be his acquisitions and discipline in other respects, who has not been taught to bring every department of his being in subjection to wholesome restraint.

We have advised you to cultivate and to cherish in spirit and in practice, a high and generous manhood; to stoop to no unworthy measures for the aggrandizement of self or party; to avoid scrupulously the petty arts and tricks of the politician, whether in Church or State. Act no borrowed part. Be what you seem. Let not your claims and pretensions be higher than

your deservings. Conduct on all occasions, so as to secure your own self-respect, and you will not fail to deserve and to receive the respect of others. These ends can be secured by a true and lofty manliness of character.

A spirit of broad and true philanthropy is another of those amiable and practical virtues, which we have commended to you. Be not bound up in the narrowness of self; allow your feelings to flow forth in all their freshness and force to your friends, your countrymen, mankind—yes, embrace in your kind regards and generous sympathies the whole human family. "Love your neighbor as yourself," is the great command of the moral law. We have aimed to impress upon you, that your education is not to be regarded as a means of self-exaltation, of fancied superiority over others, but as a talent loaned you, for use and improvement; an instrument which you are to employ for the highest good of your fellow men. As men of public spirit, of enlarged views, and of genuine benevolence, let your example reprove, and if possible check, the spirit of pride and ambitious self-seeking, that is so rife among us in these times.

We have exhorted you not to forget in your eager pursuit of the knowledge that pertains to this world, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," that the first step in true knowledge is, to perceive your relations to your Heavenly Father, and then to recognize the obligations and perform the duties that flow from those relations. "My son, give me thine heart," is the language of love and kindness that comes to you from the world above. Listen to this voice of a Father, and in all your ways, private and public, remember that his eye is upon you.

These few sentiments may be reduced to maxims, and easily remembered. *Govern yourselves: Be men: Love your race: Fear God.* Take these brief maxims with you into all the scenes and pursuits of future life, make them practical, forget them not.

There are events scattered along your class history, that admonish you not to be over sanguine, in respect to the future. Some of your early associates, with hopes and aspirations as high as your own, were arrested in their course and summoned to their last account. Four of your classmates are numbered

with the dead. *Hawkins*, the first victim, died before the class had completed its first year. *Conkey* aspired to, and would have attained distinction as a scholar, but insidious disease was preying upon his system, and consigned him at length to a premature grave. *Flint* struggled long and manfully against the united forces of penury and inherited malady, and found repose only in the embrace of death. Though dead they yet speak, and warn you not to rely too confidently upon the plans, the hopes and the aspirations of earth.

Your class, Young Gentlemen, will leave behind on the records of Alma Mater, a literary character, fair and highly creditable, and your record is not less honorable on the page of patriotism. Of the *thirty*, whose names have been found upon your catalogue, *eight* have been connected with the army or navy; and so far as I have learned, they acquitted themselves like men. Five of this number, I understand, passed through their period of service unharmed. One returned to graduate with you, but bearing upon him ineffaceable marks of the terrible conflict. The heroic valor of another is certified, as he returns to his friends by the absence of an arm. And one there was who will return no more forever. *Newton* was a brave soldier, a capable officer, and a Christian. Having served his country faithfully in many a field of honor, he was instantly killed at the head of his company in a skirmish near Cold Harbor—the martyr hero of the class of 1865.

Your College life has been somewhat eventful. The first class to enter, after the peace of the country was disturbed, the first to graduate after peace is re-established. The past four years have been a period of unparalleled agitation and excitement, of hope and fear, of suspense and anxiety; conditions certainly not friendly to calm and earnest thought, or to the highest attainments in scholarship; yet you have passed the trying ordeal, I hope, without serious detriment. With great interest and pleasure, your instructors have watched over and guided your intellectual progress and development, and they now send you forth with the fullest confidence that you will do them and your Alma Mater, no dishonor. Commending you to the protection and guidance of your Heavenly Father, they bid you an affectionate Farewell.

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